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ART. XXIII.—*Ἡ καινὴ Διαθήκη. Novum Testamentum Græce, ex recensione Jo. Jac. Griesbachii, cum selecta lectionum varietate. Lipsiæ, G. J. Göschen, 1805. Cantabrigiæ, Novanglorum, 1809. Wells & Hilliard. 8vo.*

FROM the apostolic age to the beginning of the sixteenth century, a period of more than fourteen hundred years, the writings of the New Testament existed in manuscript. They must consequently have been exposed, like all other writings, to the various errors arising from transcription. And, as the multiplication of copies was far greater than of any other writing, these errors, to say nothing of the alterations which were

designedly made to favor the purposes of a party, must have been proportionally more numerous. When the autographs of the sacred writers became lost, as it is impossible for human accuracy to produce a transcript, which shall be a perfect *fac-simile* of its original, the genuine text of the New Testament was no longer to be found in any single manuscript, but was scattered among them all. Like that of any ancient author, it can now be determined only by a comparison of manuscripts, and, out of the number of the various readings, which they present, by the selection of that, in every instance, which is recommended by the highest authority. The authority of the readings must depend principally upon the value of the manuscripts in which they are found; and the value of the manuscripts, upon the nearness of their connexion with the originals, and the degree of accuracy with which they were written.

But there are two other sources, besides the testimony of Greek manuscripts, which are of the highest importance in estimating the authority of a reading. These are the very ancient and literal versions of the New Testament into the languages of the East; and the exceedingly numerous quotations, which are found in the writings of the early Greek fathers. These both furnish evidence of the readings of the manuscripts from which they were made; and which were of an antiquity, greater, by several centuries, than the oldest which have come down to us.

Manuscript authority then, confirmed by the testimony of versions and fathers, is the only authority, which can be lawfully regarded by an editor of the Greek Testament. The press can give no sanction to a text which is destitute of this support.

The *Received Text*, which has for the last two hundred years, been scrupulously printed, word for word, in all editions of the Greek Testament, with a very few exceptions, and which the christian world has all this time not only acquiesced in, but regarded with a superstitious veneration, as containing the very *words* and *letters* of inspiration, which it would be nothing short of impiety for man to attempt to alter, can, *of itself*, have no authority; but must depend for this, as we have seen, entirely upon the sources, from which it was derived.

The *Received Text* is that, which proceeded from the celebrated press of the Elzevirs, at Leyden, in the year 1624. It was derived, with but few alterations, and these of but lit-

the importance, through Beza and Stephens, from the fifth edition of Erasmus, somewhat altered by the Complutensian. Its value will depend upon the *authorities*, which these several editors possessed for settling the true reading, and the *use* which they made of them. We shall commence with its formation by Erasmus, and trace its descent thence, through the hands of the subsequent editors.

Erasmus, while engaged in the superintendance of the publication of the works of Jerom, at Bâle, in Switzerland, received an application from Froben, the printer, to prepare an edition of the New Testament in Greek; which it was desired should be finished as soon as possible, as the profits of the sale would depend, in a great measure, upon its being delivered to the public before the Complutensian Polyglot, which was already printed, and awaiting only a license from Pope Leo X. This application was made on the 17th of April, 1515, and repeated on the 30th of the same month. The subscription to the work is dated February 1516. Supposing then Erasmus to have commenced immediately upon the second application, not more than nine months could have been employed in the preparation and printing. But it appears from the account of Erasmus himself, in a letter from Antwerp, dated June, 1516, that the work was accomplished even in less time than this; for he says, 'I have at length escaped from my confinement at Bâle, where I have performed the work of six years in *eight months*.' Now, in this short period, he was obliged to prepare, besides the Greek text, a Latin version, to be printed in a parallel column, and a large collection of notes. And all this too, at a time when he was engaged in the publication of the works of Jerom, which he says, 'demanded a great part of his attention.' It appears besides, from his letters, which Wetstein has produced in his Prolegomena, that he was himself dissatisfied with his first edition; that he was sensible he had prepared it with too much haste, considering the novelty and importance of the undertaking; having been required to supply the press with a new sheet every day. '*Præcipitatum fuit,*' are his words, '*verius quam editum.*'

However great then were the learning and critical abilities of Erasmus, it could not be otherwise than that his first edition, from the great haste with which it was prepared, should abound with errors. Not to mention the remarkable omis-